

Editorial

No baiting

The decision for the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition to change its rules and prohibit any form of baiting is initially understandable but has far reaching consequences, especially for underwater photography.

When I first read the news I immediately thought of all those fantastic gannet shots and have always thought it a bit extreme to head out with crates of mackerel - more unnatural feeding than baiting. But also the word has an aggressive tone linked to bears, snares, poison, capture and possibly death. 'Feeding' might be a better term but that throws the net even wider.

Either way, the problem with rules is that they are rarely black and white and this is certainly the case and especially for underwater images.

Think about it; if it were applied to underwater photography competitions, there would certainly be no shots of gannets, sharks are virtually impossible to see without chum, crocodiles (photographed after being fed (post-baiting?)) and then there's the use of lights at night to

attract the prey of whalesharks, manta rays etc. The list could go on.

Take it further and it would deny the conservationists a valuable source of inspirational images, so essential to raising awareness of endangered species.

The result would be a much less exciting set of images so I would argue that the rule would be detrimental to underwater images where the environment dictates that encouraging baiting is the only way to capture some of these subjects.

Fortunately the politicians would argue in favour of allowing baiting images because it would save jobs but the other problem with rules is that they provide the woke brigade with ammunition to spread the net even wider and include most tourist activities such as Basking Sharks, seals and on and on.

So, having thought about it, I would not vote for such a rule to be applied to underwater images however well meaning the intention.

Also, as this only applies to underwater photography competitions, it wouldn't put a stop to

these activities because they are not illegal.

So for Competitions, allow baiting and leave it up to the Competition judges to decide.

Is that a big enough clue?

Final call for UPY 2026 entries

The closing date for this important competition is 23:59 hrs GMT, 4 January 2026, and I'm sure you have sent yours in by now but, judging by how many come in at up to literally the last minute, one final reminder is always worth it.

Why, I am sure you are asking, does a bi-monthly magazine include details of such an imminent closing date? Well the answer is, such is the interest in each new issue of UWP that the large majority of downloads take place in the first three days of publication - thousands of them - so a reminder of such an imminent closing date is read by the majority and must help swell those last minute entries.

As a UPY judge, this is a very

exciting time of year for me as, in less than a week's time, I will meet up with fellow judges, Alex Mustard and Tobias Friedrich together with Dan Bolt, the all important IT organiser, to view this year's crop of images.

I cannot emphasise enough what a privilege it is to be entrusted with the task of choosing the winning images. It is an inspirational, exhilarating experience and, rest assured, every single one of the images entered is considered and discussed. There is no unqualified culling beforehand to lighten the judges' load and we all meet face to face for nearly three days to give the images the time and consideration they deserve.

There is no other underwater photography competition which operates at such a respectful level of professionalism and that is why it is held in such regard.

I look forward to seeing your images.

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